

SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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News Release

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Public Asked to Comment on Proposed Snapper Grouper Regulations

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council will hold public hearings on draft Amendment 9 to the Snapper Grouper Fishery Management Plan and the accompanying Supplement Environmental Impact Statement. Copies of the amendment and the public hearing summary are available from the council office.

Amendment 9 proposes measures that: (1) Increase the red porgy minimum size limit from 12" TL to 13" TL for both recreational and commercial fishermen, and establish a recreational bag limit of 2; (2) Increase the black sea bass minimum size limit from 8" TL to 10" TL for both recreational and commercial fishermen, and establish a recreational bag limit of 20; (3) Require escape vents and escape panels with degradable fasteners in black sea bass pots; (4) Establish measures for greater amberjack that will: prohibit all harvest in excess of the bag limit throughout the EEZ during April and May; prohibit sale during April and May; reduce the recreational bag limit from 3 to 1 greater amberjack per person per day; and prohibit coring; (5) Increase the recreational vermilion snapper minimum size limit from 10" to 12" TL; (6) Increase the gag minimum size limit from 20" TL to 24" TL for both recreational and commercial fishermen, and prohibit all harvest January through March; (7) Increase the black grouper minimum size limit from 20" TL to 24" TL for both recreational and commercial fishermen; (8) Specify that within the 5-fish aggregate grouper bag limit (which currently includes tilefish and excludes jewfish and Nassau grouper), no more than 2 may be gag grouper or black grouper; (9) Establish an aggregate recreational bag limit of 20 fish inclusive of all snapper grouper species currently not under a bag limit; (10) Specify that vessels with bottom longline gear aboard may only possess snowy grouper, warsaw grouper, yellowedge grouper, misty grouper, golden tilefish, blueline tilefish, and sand tilefish; (11) The Council is also evaluating use of one or more of the following measures in addition to the previous species specific actions to reduce fishing mortality:

- Establish a variable 3-month closure of the EEZ for all temperate mid-shelf species in the snapper grouper management unit by allowing snapper grouper permit holders to individually choose which 9 calendar months their permit would be effective.
- Establish an aggregate temperate mid-shelf species quota at 75% of the 1993-1995 average (with and without black sea bass), establish a 2,000 pound trip limit, begin the fishing year on April 1 and close the month of February.
- Establish a black sea bass quota at 75% of the 1993-1995 average landings.
- Establish by framework closed seasons to achieve reductions in TEMS species (with and without black sea bass) of not less than 25% of the 1993-1995 average landings.

All hearings are scheduled to begin at 7 p.m. Council staff will be available at the hearing locations from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. to answer questions regarding Amendment 9. The hearings are scheduled as follows:

June 17, 1997

Pier House Resort/One Duval Street
Key West, FL; telephone: 305-296-4600;
1-800-327-8340

June 24, 1997

Comfort Inn/5308 New Jesup Hwy
Brunswick, GA; telephone: 912-264-6540

June 25, 1997

Ramada Inn Daytona Speedway
1798 W International Speedway Blvd.
Daytona Beach FL; telephone: 904-255-2422

June 26, 1997

Holiday Inn On The Oceanfront/1350 S Ocean Blvd
Pompano Beach, FL; telephone: 954-941-7300

June 30, 1997

Sheraton Atlantic Beach/Salter Path Road
Atlantic Beach, NC; telephone: 919-240-1155

July 1, 1997

Holiday Inn Wilmington/4903 Market Street
Wilmington, NC; telephone: 910-799-1440

July 2, 1997

Town & Country Inn/2008 Savannah Hwy
Charleston, SC; telephone: 803-571-1000